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Chair

Mrs. Karen Vecchio

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the 106th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Just as a reminder, this meeting is in public.

Today we're starting our study on the barriers facing women in politics.

I am pleased to welcome the officials from Statistics Canada. Today we have with us Pamela Best, assistant director, social and aboriginal statistics division; Anna Kemeny, survey manager, social and aboriginal statistics division; and Jennifer Kaddatz, chief, social and aboriginal statistics division.

We'll be turning the floor over to you. I believe that one of you will be speaking. You will have seven minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pamela Best (Assistant Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon. We are very happy to be appearing before this committee to provide information on the general context of women's participation in political activities as part of your study on barriers facing women in politics in Canada. Statistics Canada does not produce data specifically on candidate recruitment and selection processes, professional networks and inequalities in terms of professional development opportunities or support to women in politics in Canada.

However, we do have data from the general social survey that illustrate Canadians social behaviours in political activities. Today, we are presenting a gender-based analysis that will look at the representation of women in parliamentary and government positions, their participation in civic and political organizations, as well as their opinions on politics. The majority of the data we are presenting today come from the 2013 general social survey on social identity.

[*English*]

We know that women are under-represented in senior government, legislative, and parliamentary positions in Canada. In this country, women represent 46% of senior government managers and officials, 35% of legislators, and 27% of persons holding seats in national Parliament. However, they do represent 50% of cabinet ministers.

The proportion of women working as senior government managers and officials is consistent with the labour market representation of women, where women overall are still under-represented. In 2015 women represented 48% of the labour force. It should be noted, however, that women's labour market participation is increasing and that women comprised 37% of the labour force in 1976.

To provide more context around the labour force participation of women, we see for women who work that they work on average 5.6 hours per week less than men, and that currently 19% of employed women work part-time, compared to 6% of employed men. The presence and age of the youngest child in the household has a notable effect on the work hours of women but very little effect on those of men. The average weekly work hours of mothers ranged from 34 for those with a child under the age of six, to 36 for those with a child aged 18 to 24. Women who did not have a child under the age of 25 worked the greater numbers of hours per week, with an average of 36.4.

Now that we've provided some context about the labour force participation of women, let's next look at their membership in political parties and organizations.

Women are still less likely than men to be members of a political party or to volunteer for a political party, but instead take on membership in school, neighbourhood, and community groups. Women represented 43% of members of a political party in 2013. About 530 women and 700 men were members of a party that year. This translates to 5% of men being members of a political party in 2013, compared to 4% of women. When broken down by age, it is those in the older age groups of 65 and over who are likely to be members, at 7%, and those in younger age groups of 15 to 54 who are the least likely, at 3%.

Our data show that 320 men, or 2.2% of all men, volunteered for a political party in 2013, compared to 240 women, or 1.6%. Membership in service clubs shows a very similar pattern to membership in political parties, with 7% of men having been members of a service club in 2013, compared to 6% of women. Note, too, that membership in a political party or political group association tends to be much less popular than other types of clubs or organizations.

For example, while 4% of Canadians are members of a political party or a group association, closer to 30% of Canadians are members of sports or recreational organizations, or cultural, educational, or hobby organizations, according to the 2013 general social survey on social identity. Women showed more interest than men in joining a school group, neighbourhood, civic or community association, at 20% versus 15%.

Next, let us look at the different ways in which men and women participate in certain political activities.

● (1535)

While 17% of men reported having attended a public meeting in the past 12 months, only 13% of women did so. Similarly, a higher proportion of men expressed their views on a political or social issue by contacting a newspaper or politician or by expressing views though the Internet.

On the other hand, women are as likely as men to sign a petition and are more likely to boycott or choose a product for ethical reasons.

Other types of political activities, such as participating in a demonstration or a march, wearing badges and T-shirts, displaying lawn signs in support of or in opposition to a political or social cause, or signing a petition on the Internet also showed no difference between the behaviour of men and women.

Could participation in political groups be related to interest in politics? Compared with men, it appears that women may be less interested in politics. Although 24% of men reported being very interested in politics in 2013, only 15% of women said they were. On the other end of the scale, more women than men said they were not very interested, 25% versus 19% of men.

When it comes to voting, women are equally likely as men to vote in federal elections, and they are more likely than men to vote at the provincial or municipal levels. When women do not vote in federal elections, they give slightly different reasons from those given by men for not doing so. Most notably in 2013, 13% of women said they did not vote because they were not informed on issues, compared with 7% of men. Women are also less likely than men to search for information on political issues.

Participation in political activities is positively associated with education and income group. More educated women and men, and women and men with higher incomes, are more likely to have positions in government and to undertake civic and political activities.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

In closing, when we look at community engagement and political activity through a gender-based analysis, we see differences in the political participation of women and men, where women are less likely than men to be members of a political party.

Women participate in their community in other ways. For example, they are more likely than men to join school groups, neighbourhood associations, citizens' organizations and community groups. Although women are less likely than men to attend public meetings or express their opinion openly, they sign petitions and participate in other political activities just as often as men. In general, however, fewer women say that they are interested in political issues.

Data for the next cycle of the general social survey on social identity will be collected in 2020. That will enable us to examine changes over time in attitudes and behaviours relative to political participation.

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to present our data in your study. My colleagues, Anna Kemeny and Jennifer Kaddatz, and I will gladly answer your questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Excellent, and thank you very much for your opening remarks.

We'll begin our seven-minute round with Emmanuella Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you for being with us today to answer our questions.

You mentioned that women are just as likely as men to sign petitions or to boycott or choose products for ethical reasons, which kind of gives us the idea that they feel just as strongly about issues as men do, yet they're not as likely to become active or to join certain groups or to engage in any activities regarding political parties or volunteering.

Why do you think this is? What reasons would you give me to explain the lack of activity versus the lack of interest?

Ms. Pamela Best: The data don't allow us to actually go into that kind of detail, and I'm afraid I have to speak to the data. What we do see, though, is that difference whereby women seem a little less likely to put themselves out there. They are less likely to speak up in a meeting. They are less likely to express an opinion on the Internet. They seem, as you said, to still be engaged but perhaps in ways that are not exposing themselves as much in the public.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Do you think it is because they feel they don't belong, because there are fewer women in this sphere?

Ms. Pamela Best: I'm afraid the data actually don't allow us to shine that kind of lens on it.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: You also mentioned that people who are more educated are more likely to go into politics or to express their political opinions and get more involved. Do you have any statistics about women versus men when it comes to how educated the population is?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz (Chief, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada): Although we mostly presented general social survey data today, we do have some statistics from the 2016 census. Looking at the census data was really interesting, because they highlight some differences, but not extreme disadvantages for women. Women actually are more likely to have a university degree at the bachelor's level or higher than men: 25% of women in 2016 versus 22% of men, so it's fairly close, but not a big difference.

What was interesting, though, is we took a look at people who are university educated and whether or not they were likely to report an occupation in 2016. It seems that while women are more likely than men to be working under the age of 25 after they've obtained their university degree, after the age of 35 women's employment goes down. This would lend itself to saying they're likely to be more involved in child rearing and family-related responsibilities.

I also looked at some of the data on education related to participation, and legislative occupations and senior government roles. If you look at fields of study like political science and law, the number of women with university degrees in those fields is fairly similar, but where there's a little bit of a difference is with respect to business management and public administration degrees in those fields. For example, in 2016 there was a difference of four percentage points of the share of women going into business. There was a four percentage points difference from what it was for men going into business, and this is actually a little more pronounced for the 15- to 24-year-olds. If we look overall at all the people working in senior government positions or legislative positions, business is the main field of study reported, followed by the social and behavioural sciences. There could be something there related to business as a field of study.

● (1545)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Of the people who are cabinet ministers or people holding seats in national Parliament, do we have any statistics that speak to whether or not they volunteered or joined parties before becoming cabinet ministers or holding seats in Parliament?

Ms. Pamela Best: Statistics Canada doesn't gather data. The surveys we conduct are general household surveys, so we're not specifically targeting populations of interest such as political party members.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: With regard to education, we mentioned that women are more likely to have a university degree overall. Does that vary by province?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: I don't have those data in front of me, but it's likely they do. I know that Anna did bring some data on interest in politics by province that might be of interest to the group.

Ms. Anna Kemeny (Survey Manager, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada):

Yes, one of the questions was "How interested are you in politics?" The response categories were "very interested", "somewhat interested", "not very interested", and "not at all interested". What we found is that the highest proportion of women who reported to be "very interested" occurred in Quebec at 18% and the lowest proportion occurred in New Brunswick at 9%.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Okay.

Do I have some time left?

The Chair: Yes, you have 90 seconds.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I'm going to pass my time to Bernadette.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you, witnesses, for appearing today.

I find it interesting when you're talking about the provincial differences. Can you tell me what Nova Scotia was, please?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: In Nova Scotia, women were at 15%.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: At 15%. What year was this?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: It was 2013.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: You don't do this again until 2020. Is that correct?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: Yes.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Is that normal, a seven-year cycle?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: Generally, for the social surveys we tend to do five-year intervals, but we actually have more subject matter areas now, so some of them are spaced apart a little more.

Ms. Pamela Best: I would just add something on this question of the timeliness of the general social survey. I've made two appearances before a Senate committee on charitable donations, as well, recently and that question has come up. Stats Canada is modernizing the general social survey. We do hear that the frequency with which the data are collected is important.

We have to balance the resources that Statistics Canada has as an organization and the burden that we place on our respondents when we're looking at the frequency of the data we collect. We also understand that we may need to measure certain social trends with a higher frequency than others, so we're examining all of the data that we gather in this program, whether it be victimization data, data on social identity, information on caregiving and care receiving, to see if the frequency should be changed.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Bernadette and Emmanuella.

Rachael, you're on for seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you so much.

Could you do us a favour and run through province by province so that we have an understanding of what those discrepancies look like? Just for clarification, we're looking at the percentage of women who are very interested. Is that correct?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: I have the other percentages as well but we'll look to the extremes, whether they're interested or not at all interested.

The overall figure in Canada, as you can see from your infographic, is.... Do you want men and women or just women?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Just women.

Ms. Anna Kemeny: So the Canadian average is 15%. Newfoundland and Labrador is 12%. Prince Edward Island is 17%, but that's a number that should be treated with caution.

Nova Scotia, as I said, is 15%. New Brunswick is 9%. Quebec is 18%. Ontario is 15%. Manitoba is 13%. Saskatchewan is 12%. Alberta is 15%. British Columbia is 15% as well.

● (1550)

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: We'd be happy to provide you with the actual tables for that after the meeting.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That would be great. If you could provide the tables, that would be excellent.

I'm curious. Why is P.E.I. supposed to be treated with some caution?

Ms. Pamela Best: I'll address that. It's just because it's a general household survey and we have a fairly small sample size. When we get to the smaller provinces and we break those numbers down into smaller and smaller pieces, there's a higher degree of variability. It's not that we need to be cautious of those from Prince Edward Island, just of the estimates the data produce.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Of course, thank you very much.

What is the total percentage of women in Canada's population as a whole?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: I think it's something like 52% or 53%.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I am looking for StatsCanada data and not opinions around the table. Is it 52%? Is it 53%?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: We can probably get that for you if you want exact percentages.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That will be really great, thank you.

Can you talk a little bit about income levels, income level of the women versus income level of the men, particularly with the same education? I want to see where we are in Canada as a whole in terms of income levels for women versus men.

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: When preparing for today, we really tried to focus on the question at hand and come up with statistics from the general social survey about activity. Statistics Canada definitely has those numbers on income levels, age levels, even the earlier question about university degrees by province, and we can provide all that to you, but we would need to do that after this meeting as well.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

Are you able to comment on what percentage of women participated in the last federal election, breaking that down by province? Do you have that on hand?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: We don't have that on hand.

Ms. Pamela Best: No, we don't. In fact, we didn't think that the voting behaviour was going to be of interest to the committee today. I'm very sorry that we didn't bring that for you, but we can make it available.

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: The other item to note is that this survey focus is from 2013. It didn't focus on the last federal election. I know Status of Women Canada, which is presenting in the hour after us, does have some data for the last federal election. I don't know what their source is but it wasn't from Statistics Canada.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I have many interpretive questions but unfortunately you wouldn't be able to answer those for me.

In terms of data, I really would like to know the voting patterns of women across the country by province. That would be of interest to me. As well, I would love to have verified the exact percentage of women in Canada, in our population as a whole.

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: For voting patterns, do you just want federal elections in 2013, or do you want the provincial and municipal as well?

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm interested in federal, but I'm sure the committee as a whole would find both helpful for understanding voting patterns at the provincial and municipal levels. If you're able to give that information to us, that would be wonderful.

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: We can give you those. They are fairly interesting because women are...we're reporting in 2013 that they're more likely to vote in the municipal and provincial elections than in the federal.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That's interesting. When they answer these questions though, do women have an opportunity to explain why they come to that conclusion?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: No.

We build a general social survey based on input from several policy departments. Since we have to keep the response burden low and the number of questions limited, anything that's too detailed on a specific topic, we have to weigh against all the needs of the federal government, at the same time. Those types of questions didn't make it into the last round, but there's still an opportunity to get them into our 2020 survey, if that's seen as a priority by the government.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

As I don't have the data in front of me, but you do, is there other data that we should be aware of that I'm failing to ask you about?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: I can think of one thing.

I think you might have alluded to this in your last question, but the reason for not voting in the last federal election—and this is in our infographic—is the fact that women felt that they were less informed. One thing that interested me about the data was that I thought maybe women would be more busy to vote or men would be more busy, but actually, when we added up the number who didn't vote because they were either at work or busy with child care or other things, it actually came out about even. Those data weren't showing as anything major. Again, that is something we could provide to you after this meeting.

Also, we have another survey at Statistics Canada that recently asked about voting behaviours. We didn't include that here because we really found that women reporting that they weren't informed on the issues was a really interesting fact and that wasn't one of the response categories in the other survey. We can provide you with data from both those sources later.

● (1555)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

I just want to clarify. Basically, you would say that those women who said that they were too busy to vote and those women who said they didn't feel informed about the issues, would that percentage be about the same?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: No. The percentage of women saying they were busy and men saying they were busy was about the same.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay. Do you have those numbers with you today or will you get those to us at another time?

A voice: Do you have them?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: I don't think so.

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: The biggest difference that stood out was for the category about not being informed.

Again, we don't know if it is that women are more likely to admit to an interviewer that they weren't informed than men are or if there's something else going on behind that data. Again, we didn't have the time in the survey to explore that in detail.

Ms. Anna Kemeny: I have a couple of those reasons. They are not informed and we talked about that. They are not interested is the same for men and women, which is 20% for both. Some felt that voting would not make a difference and that was their reason for not voting. Men were quite a bit more likely to feel that, with 9% of men and 5% of women responding to that.

Ms. Rachael Harder: For which one?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: Those who felt that voting would not make a difference as a reason for not voting, where men would be 9% and women would be 5%.

The Chair: We've gone about one minute over, so I'm going to take one minute away from the CPC on round two.

Ms. Quach, it's your turn for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, ladies, for coming to provide us with some insight.

We just heard that some people thought voting was pointless. Was there a question related to voting systems, such as the proportional voting system? The question might have asked whether people would be more likely to vote if there was a proportional voting system, for instance.

Ms. Pamela Best: There were actually no questions on the voting system in the general social survey. I don't know whether that is mentioned in other surveys.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Should it be added to future surveys?

Ms. Pamela Best: As we were saying earlier, we are working on the content related to social identity for the next survey. If a question is of national significance, we have some flexibility.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Great.

Did you ask questions about systems covered in the media? It would appear that strong women's presentation in the media and in politics has some influence. Do you agree?

Ms. Pamela Best: Again, the data unfortunately does not allow us to make that analysis.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay. Have you looked at the number of information campaigns specifically for women?

Ms. Pamela Best: We haven't looked at the media or at information campaigns. I'm sorry. Those are all excellent questions.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

There are also issues with information campaigns carried out by the chief electoral officer. It is said that women feel the least informed to vote, which is why a number of campaigns are targeting women.

Ms. Pamela Best: That's a very interesting question, but we don't have any data on that.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

We are told that women are not really interested in politics.

Are there issues that interest them more?

[*English*]

Ms. Pamela Best: Anna, do we know from the general social survey what are the questions of social identity that women are more interested in? Do we have general data from that survey?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: Not really, not in comparison with that.

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: We can infer some of it from the data in the infographic. Women are spending more time on local and civic issues, and volunteering for schools and clubs, so they may feel that these things are more important than volunteering for political parties.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: We are talking about women in general, but do you have information on racialized women?

Are women in any specific age groups more interested in politics?

Is there any data on women who are racialized, women living in remote regions or aboriginal women?

Ms. Pamela Best: We have some data on that, but I want to point out once again that the size of the sample is fairly small in the general social survey. If we look at the rate of participation in political organizations, which is already very low, and we focus on various age groups, we see that the data and estimates are increasingly unreliable.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: We did run a table looking at interest in politics by aboriginal groups. We intended to bring that here today, but for most of the categories of interest on first nations, Métis, and Inuit, we had that E that indicates a large coefficient of variation, which means that because of the small sample size in this survey we can't really analyze those data.

We are making a concerted effort on the GSS to increase our sample sizes for aboriginal people and minority groups so that we can do more, but for this survey on that particular question, we weren't able to tease anything else out of the data.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

Rwanda has the highest proportion of women in a political position. The percentage of women in Parliament is 61% there. In Sweden, that percentage is 43.6%. Moreover, some countries have adopted electoral quotas.

Did you ask any questions on the electoral quotas parties have imposed to increase that proportion, given that Canada ranks 60th in the world in that respect?

Ms. Pamela Best: We did not ask those questions, which are excellent but are not part of the general social survey.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: I am unlucky today.

Did you ask questions on what would encourage women to take an interest in politics?

In women's discussion groups, mentorship is something that comes up often. They are saying that more mentorship is needed.

If there was more, would women be more likely to get involved in politics?

Ms. Pamela Best: As I said in my presentation, mentorship and leadership were not covered in the general social survey.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay. I have one last question.

Much is being said about barriers in the parliamentary community. Some of the issues brought up are the work-life balance, voting hours and so on.

Do you have any information on that you could share with us?

Ms. Pamela Best: That was definitely not one of the questions regarding the parliamentary community. A study titled *Women in Canada*, published by Statistics Canada in collaboration with its partners from Status of Women Canada, contains a chapter that delves into the issue of women and paid work. I don't have that study on hand, but its general focus is women's experience in the job market. I'm not completely sure that it covered issues related to the work-life balance, but that chapter focuses on all women and their paid work.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're now going to Pam Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thanks, Chair.

You were talking about the survey. Is anything in there about the nomination process, about how many women run for nomination? Would it make sense for that to fall within Elections Canada versus StatsCan?

Ms. Pamela Best: I can't really answer that because I don't know what the mandate is of Elections Canada. Statistics Canada, in this context, is basing its data on a household survey. It's a general population survey.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Right. It wouldn't be possible for you to track how many women run for a nomination or some of the more specific things that I think some of us have had an interest in?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: It might be possible to track, but not in our vehicles that we use right now in our current surveys.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It wouldn't be done on a regular basis either. You'd be doing it every five to seven years.

● (1605)

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: That could be negotiated. If it was a brand new survey or a brand new administrative instrument that we're doing, the timeliness could always be negotiated. It's mainly the general social survey that we work on that's every five to seven years. Other surveys at Statistics Canada run with different frequencies.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Can you explain to me the difference between the general social survey and the study that you did, "Civic Engagement and Political Participation in Canada"? That report drew data from the general social survey, right?

Ms. Pamela Best: The general social survey is a survey program that encompasses a number of different cycles. The cycle that was of interest here today was the cycle on social identity, which had the questions on civic engagement. The GSS also gathers data on a cyclical basis for caregiving and care receiving, giving, volunteering and participating, victimization, etc. Every year there is a cycle of general social survey. Every five to six or seven years, the data that we're collecting is different.

Ms. Pam Damoff: You also did a report, "Civic Engagement and Political Participation in Canada". That's where these stats are coming from.

Ms. Pamela Best: That's right, and those are derived from the general social survey.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay. That report probably has a lot more data that would be of interest to us, because you mentioned something about more women are involved in schools and clubs.

What are the breakdowns? Often, people who run for political office need large networks. Depending on what your volunteerism is, it may be that those organizations are smaller rather than larger. Other than schools and clubs, what would you look at?

Ms. Pamela Best: What we do know—

Ms. Anna Kemeny: I have some of the numbers here. For example, if you look at being members of a school group, neighbourhood or civic organization, we have 20% of women and 15% of men who are members. We have talked already about members of political groups. I could actually get you the data for a number of other things if you're interested, such as sports organizations, unions, cultural organizations, the whole variety of them. We can send those to you if you like.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'd be very interested in seeing—

Ms. Pamela Best: We do have data, as well, from the GSS on volunteering, which shows that women are more likely than men to volunteer, and that men's and women's behaviours in volunteering are different.

Men are more likely to be coaches or to engage in maintenance or repair services, whereas women are more involved in organizing committees or involved in health care. They're more involved in church groups and school groups, etc.

Ms. Pam Damoff: On this chart, where you have a lower proportion of women who report being very interested in politics, you've said politics in general. When I look at the footnote, it says "international, national, provincial, and municipal". Do you have it broken down between those four categories? Being interested in international politics is a lot different than being interested in municipal politics.

Ms. Anna Kemeny: No, it was just one question: "How interested are you in politics?"

Ms. Pam Damoff: When you asked the question, did you specify international, federal...?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: There was a note. If people wanted to have it clarified, then we would read it out to them.

Ms. Pam Damoff: You talked about the regional differences. In terms of the number of women who are members or volunteer for a political party, you gave us the regional differences. Do you also have it by age? You don't have to give it to us now, but we would like to see what the age breakdown is.

I think you indicated to my NDP colleague that, when we're talking about GBA+, you don't have it broken down on the plus side, to take into account marginalized women, or women living with disabilities, or—

Ms. Pamela Best: Or indigenous women, or looking at by population group, otherwise known as visible minority status....

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay. There is only so much you can ask StatsCan.

Ms. Pamela Best: And we really do try to be fun.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Pam Damoff: Is there any data that shows...? When you were talking about women being just as busy as men, is that the wording that was used for why they didn't vote, that they were too busy?

● (1610)

Ms. Anna Kemeny: They were too busy.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It didn't specify doing what.

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: No, and there were three categories that indicated there were time constraints, like at work, something else other than too busy, so it was a combination of all three that was equal, but there could have been some slight differences between men and women on the specific categories. Again, we can provide that to you afterwards.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

It was just, "Why did you not vote?" Was there anything else besides, "I was too busy" or "I wasn't informed"?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: Yes, on the question of why you did not vote, first of all, it's only related to the past federal election, and then it said, "What were the reasons you did not vote?" and they were listed underneath. We can send you the whole group of questions if you like, or I can read them out to you, but it's quite long.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Obviously there was a difference between men and women not being informed. This being busy was equal.

Ms. Anna Kemeny: Yes. Most of the other categories were pretty close. It was them not being informed that stood out.

Ms. Pam Damoff: What was the number one reason people did not vote?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: What was the number one reason? It is in there. Just give me a second.

Ms. Pam Damoff: You can get it for us and send it to us.

Ms. Anna Kemeny: Yes. Okay, the number one reason.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to switch over to our five-minute round. We're going to start with four minutes to Gérard Deltell.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Chair, I am very pleased to be invited to this committee, and I am very pleased to see you running the show quite well.

Mesdames, welcome to your House of Commons committee.

First of all, Madam Chair, I have to excuse myself because I misled the committee when I said a few minutes ago that it is 52% women in Canada. Well, based on the figures that I checked on the Statistics Canada site, I have learned that, based on the figure for 2017, there are 36.7 million Canadians, and 50.4% are women and 49.6% are men, so it's almost equal. I'm sorry for that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Pamela Best: I've checked your estimates.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Yes, and I will check myself, as well, the next time I speak.

[*Translation*]

Ladies, I would like to ask you two questions about the first table, which focuses on the representation of women in Canada.

As I was unfortunately a bit late to the meeting, I don't know whether you have already provided the information. In the table, it says 35% of legislators. Legislators are lawmakers. So they are members of provincial, territorial or federal parliaments.

Is that right?

Ms. Pamela Best: That's right.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Great.

I assume that you also provided information for each province.

Ms. Pamela Best: We actually just provided a summary, but that data is available by province.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Okay.

Do any provinces have an equal percentage of women and men?

[*English*]

To your knowledge, is there equity in any legislature in Canada?

Ms. Pamela Best: In any of the provinces, is there a province that has equity in the legislators?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Is there 50:50 women and men?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: I didn't look at legislators, because the number of legislators in Canada was fairly small. No, I don't have that here. I have the number of legislators who took political science at school, but that's something different.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Well, I don't want to start a debate on what is a "nation", but in French you're talking about

[*Translation*]

people with a seat in Parliament

[*English*]

and in the English version you are talking about the national Parliament.

I don't want to put you in a predicament.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pamela Best: It's true that there is a difference between the two.

It is noted.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Okay.

That's good.

Ms. Pamela Best: We did not provide that document to the public. It was created only for this committee.

We are taking note of that.

Thank you.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: That's very good.

I just wanted to show that I read every word carefully.

● (1615)

Ms. Pamela Best: I really appreciate your attention.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Let's now look at the statistical data.

As my colleague Ms. Harder said earlier, you cannot comment on the figures subjectively. I respect that, and I definitely don't want to put you in an awkward position.

However, when I look at all the figures, there isn't a lot of difference between men and women, with the exception of women who are "very interested" or "not at all interested". When it comes to expressing views through a newspaper or a politician, the percentage of women is 9% and that of men is 11%. So that is not a significant difference.

I understand that, statistically speaking, if we are talking about 12% and 16%, there is a difference of four points, which is one-third. So it is 33% more. We are after all talking about 12% to 16%. That's my very personal and subjective understanding. In any case, I am paid to be subjective and you're not. I know that.

Have you done any similar analyses on trades, regardless which, where similar figures are found in terms of engagement?

Ms. Pamela Best: I'm not sure I understand your question, but I don't think we have any studies on that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Here is my point.

Is my time up?

[*English*]

The Chair: There is no more time for you.

Thank you.

We're going to move to Marc Serré, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the witnesses for participating in this meeting.

Do you have any statistics that establish a parallel between women in politics in rural communities and those in urban communities?

Ms. Pamela Best: No.

Mr. Marc Serré: If you do have some, could you send them to us?

Ms. Pamela Best: In the census, we could look at the number of people who are outside of metropolitan regions. That would be an estimate.

Mr. Marc Serré: Very well.

In the documents prepared by the analyst, it says that, in 2015, women represented "30.5% of band councillors on First Nations of Canada band councils". That percentage is higher than in municipal, provincial and federal spheres.

Do you have an analysis that would explain the fact that the percentage of aboriginal women who are members of first nations band councils is so high?

Ms. Pamela Best: Aside from the census, Statistics Canada does not conduct surveys on first nations communities. We have the aboriginal peoples survey, but it focuses on first nations members living off-reserve, as well as the Métis and Inuit. Data from that survey will be available next fall.

Mr. Marc Serré: You said earlier that women were more likely to vote in federal elections than in provincial elections.

Ms. Pamela Best: It's the opposite.

Mr. Marc Serré: It's the opposite?

Ms. Pamela Best: Women are more likely to vote in provincial or municipal elections than in federal elections.

Mr. Marc Serré: Okay.

In that context, health and education are more important. Thank you for clarifying.

Let's now talk about the lack of information. You mentioned that surveys follow a seven-year cycle.

When should the federal government provide you with recommendations or additional resources to ensure that the 2020 census would contain more questions on the issue we are discussing today?

Ms. Pamela Best: I think there will be a general social survey in September.

[*English*]

Ms. Anna Kemeny: We are doing consultations right at the moment, and we will be able to accept comments until the end of August.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: So we are talking about a late-August deadline for a report that will be published in 2020?

● (1620)

Ms. Pamela Best: As part of Statistics Canada's modernization, we are also looking at the time frames related to the development of our surveys. We know that is an issue.

Mr. Marc Serré: I would like to come back to Ms. Harder's question.

Have you issued recommendations to the government in the past to obtain additional resources or enhance the components of the general social survey?

Ms. Pamela Best: Investments have been made to study the way the general social survey is conducted. That includes all the statistics collected through that program. We are hoping that the first component of the new general social survey will be ready in 2021. In the context of modernization, we are considering data sources other than surveys, such as administrative sources. We also want to use more scientific methods, including new data creation models. We are investing a lot of time and effort in that.

Mr. Marc Serré: Could you provide the clerk with information explaining how Canadians could participate in that process by the end of August?

That would be greatly appreciated.

Ms. Pamela Best: Definitely.

Mr. Marc Serré: Has the auditor general made recommendations to Statistics Canada to help the organization enhance data collection in that area or in other areas?

Ms. Pamela Best: Unfortunately, I do not know, but that does not mean he has not.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: When it comes to harassment, have there been any studies on bullying?

As members of Parliament, we have made recommendations on that.

Ms. Pamela Best: Yes, we have statistics on harassment in the workplace. According to those statistics, women are more often victims of bullying than men.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Gérard Deltell.

Take as many minutes as you need—up to five.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you so much, Karen. Don't worry. I learned my lesson.

[*Translation*]

I want to come back to the issue I discussed with you earlier.

Of course, a lot of focus is being placed on the number of women running for office. In fact, 50% of candidates can be women without any of them getting elected. We cannot presume how people will vote. Another possibility would be 100% of women being elected and the House of Commons being made up of only women, even though half the candidates were women. A lot of focus is being placed on that, but there is an element that is outside our control. However, it is possible to control it in other fields.

The reason I asked you the question is the following. Politicians are in positions of authority. They're also public figures. According to surveys, people don't like politicians in general, but they love their politician. That is what we are seeing in our ridings. People like us, but they do not like politicians in general. They like us individually. They prefer the tree to the forest.

I would like to establish a parallel with people who are working in the medical field, such as doctors. They are also public figures. They are recognized and are in positions of authority. They make highly consequential decisions.

Does the medical field have the same proportion? Have you carried out surveys to find out what the abilities of people who want to work in the medical field are, as you have done for the political world?

Ms. Pamela Best: I don't have any data on physicians in particular.

I once again want to come back to the publication *Women in Canada*, which provides information on women studying in

[*English*]

STEM, which is science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

[*Translation*]

According to that report, there are differences between men and women in terms of what they study. It shows that an increasing number of women are choosing to pursue studies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM. I assume that changes will occur over time.

I'm sorry, but I cannot answer the question about medical professions.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You are talking about STEM professions or jobs in the science field. I think that medicine is a very scientific field. Currently, more women than men are studying medicine, but more men than women are studying engineering. Those are two scientific professions, but we see that men are more attracted to engineering and women to medicine. That does not preclude having competent people.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Sean Fraser, you have five minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Perfect. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here. I have lots of questions and limited time, so I'll jump right in.

Do you have essentially a cross-reference between the data you presented today with the factor of whether the respondent actually has a locally elected representative who is a woman?

Ms. Pamela Best: No, and I don't think the data would support that granularity of analysis just because of the way we have the geography on the dataset.

Mr. Sean Fraser: If you have the geography on the dataset, wouldn't you be able to cross-reference with whoever the representative was at the time the data was collected?

Ms. Pamela Best: We'd have to verify to see if we could do that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I'd love to hear back from you guys on that, if possible.

Ms. Pamela Best: Yes.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Are there factors that you guys have analyzed to determine whether there's a high correlation between a desire to run for office with other socio-economic factors or levels of political engagement?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: No, we have not done that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Is it possible to do that with the data that's already available?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: I don't think so.

Ms. Pamela Best: I think the numbers will be too small.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Do you mean the sample size?

Ms. Pamela Best: Yes. In terms of your question, you're looking at the correlation of people who are running for political office—

● (1625)

Mr. Sean Fraser: No, it's the people who express a desire to run, or potentially the people who express that they're very interested in politics. Maybe that's an easier way to do it.

What I'm trying to get at is to realize what factors are most strongly correlated to a woman who says, "Hey, look at me. I'm very, very interested in politics." From my perspective, that is somebody we should be reaching out to, trying to inspire them to see themselves in office as well. Are there factors you have identified that would help us identify who these people are?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: We could undertake that study, I believe, but we have not undertaken it yet. It would be a modelling exercise based on interest in politics: we don't have the desire to run for office, just an interest in politics.

Mr. Sean Fraser: What would the resources be like to do it, to undertake a study like that?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: We'd have to consult with another division at Statistics Canada to answer that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: With regard to the issue of resources again, to me it seems like these five-, six-, seven-year cycles for the different chapters of the general social survey are not frequent enough to get the real value that I think it can produce. Is it within reason for this committee to make a recommendation that we start doing this in two- and three-year cycles? Is that something which the capacity could exist for? Is it just a matter of funding, or are there other things that are getting in the way?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: We appreciate any support we can get, so yes, but I will highlight, too, that it depends on the particular topic. The general social survey, as Pamela mentioned, has several different issues. We can shed a ton of light on our victimization survey on victimization rates in Canada. We have very good giving and volunteering statistics. It's more the specific political area that we don't generally collect a lot of data on, particularly because the number of people running for office and things is fairly small compared to the whole general population.

Providing support to ask questions like that may still be difficult, but as Pamela mentioned, we're modernizing. We could look at different administrative data sources rather than surveys. However, yes, in general, if there's something we collect but we can't release because of small sample sizes, like the aboriginal or minority data, we would love more support towards funding for that, if I'm allowed to say that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Sure, you're allowed. You've said it now.

I'm curious. Is there data that you have identified that would potentially be useful, but that you haven't been able to collect because it's perhaps too far down the priority list and you don't want to dilute the...? You have actually done it; I see you nodding.

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: Yes, there are times when we have been asked to collect data on things that we could collect data on, but in terms of all the government and private sector priorities, they sometimes don't end up on the questionnaire.

Mr. Sean Fraser: After this meeting, could you send us a list of those areas that you'd like to collect that data on, but haven't been able to?

Ms. Jennifer Kaddatz: Potentially. It varies a lot by survey and over time. We could look into it. I'll see what we can do.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I only have one minute left.

You mentioned that it's difficult to target studies because of the population size. Would it be possible for you to actually do a targeted study and identify women who have held different public offices?

Ms. Pamela Best: That would be a different way for Statistics Canada to do business.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Okay. That's fine.

I have a final question.

In the box on the document you circulated, you indicated that women are as likely as men to vote in federal elections, but when they don't, they're nearly twice as likely to say that it's because they were uninformed. I think that's probably a lack of willingness by men to admit that they're uninformed.

Ms. Pamela Best: I have no statistical data on that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: What's that?

Ms. Pamela Best: I have no data on that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Do men who say that they're not informed still say that they vote anyway? Is that data available to us?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: It was asked of people who did not vote. This was given as one of the reasons they did not vote. It was only asked of the population who did not vote in the last federal election.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Ms. Quach, you have three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Have you done any studies to compare Canada's situation to that in other countries? I know that the survey is conducted only domestically, in Canada, but have you done any comparative analyses?

Ms. Pamela Best: We have not done any international analyses, but I know that Statistics Canada is often asked to provide data in the context of the G7. We don't have the data on hand, but Statistics Canada provides data to facilitate the comparison with other countries, when data is collected in its surveys.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

Do you have data on francophone women and anglophone women who go into politics?

Ms. Pamela Best: Yes, we can provide you with that information.

Questions on official languages are different. For instance, there are questions on what the most spoken language is, the language spoken at home and the ability to conduct a conversation.

● (1630)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

Those questions do not focus on finding out whether women are getting involved in politics, but whether they speak French or English. Is that right?

Ms. Pamela Best: Everything we have provided today can be looked at according to the ability to conduct a conversation in English or in French, or the mother tongue.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

A lot has been said about reasons why women abstain from voting, but what makes women vote? What motivates them to vote?

Ms. Anna Kemeny: There is no information on that.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

In the table, the first information square provides the percentage of women who are senior government officials or legislators. Are there any questions on the number of women who run for a second term as officials or legislators?

Ms. Pamela Best: No, I am sorry.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

Are there other questions that provide details on women's involvement in administration? Are they attracted to any particular positions?

Ms. Pamela Best: Based on the census, I think we can have a more in-depth analysis. However, that is not our area of expertise, but we can see what is available.

Are you interested in any specific questions?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: I am really interested in the positions.

Do any particular positions attract women more in administration?

Ms. Pamela Best: Are you talking about administration in the health and education fields, and so on?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: We could be talking about certain areas of activity, but also within boards of directors. I am thinking of various positions, such as chair, vice-chair or any other position.

Ms. Pamela Best: We are actually focusing specifically on women in leadership positions. We try to cross-reference against data on the administrative field. We cannot give an exact answer to that question right now, but we hope to be able to do so soon. It may not be this year.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm going to have to cut it down because we do have to start on our next panel. There is a list, and I have nine down here. The clerk looks forward to working with you because I know there have been a lot of asks. We can look at this data, aggregate it, and check everything out.

I would like to thank Statistics Canada for coming today. We look forward to working with you and getting all of your information.

We will suspend for about a few minutes as we change our panels. Thank you.

● (1630)

(Pause)

● (1635)

The Chair: This is the 106th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I would like to welcome the Office of the Co-ordinator of Status of Women as we study barriers facing women in politics.

Nancy Gardiner, Justine Akman, Selena Beattie, Riri Shen, and Joshua Bath, thank you very much for joining us today.

I am going to pass the floor over to Ms. Akman for her opening statement.

Ms. Justine Akman (Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I missed the last Status of Women FEWO appearance, so I'm happy to be with you today as you undertake to study barriers facing women in politics.

Recently we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first women in Canada winning the right to vote in federal elections. As we acknowledge this achievement in our country's history, we remain mindful of the work remaining and so welcome this study.

[*Translation*]

The advancement of women's participation in democracy is essential to achieving gender equality and ensuring a better future for us all.

[*English*]

Introducing a gender-balanced federal cabinet in 2015 marked an important milestone for Canada; however, women still only represent 27% of members of Parliament. The Inter-Parliamentary Union ranks Canada 61st out of 190 countries on the proportion of women elected to Parliament. In comparison, women make up 19% of House representatives in the U.S., 39% in France, and 44% in Sweden.

[*Translation*]

These numbers point to continued barriers to women's equal participation in democracy, indicating ongoing systemic discrimination and persistent unconscious bias.

[*English*]

Barriers that prevent women from political participation are many, and they include societal perceptions of appropriate career paths for women, a lack of support from party leadership, a lack of role models, sexual harassment and violence, disproportionate responsibility for caregiving, and a fear of negative attacks and media attention based on gender norms. These barriers impede the development of a pipeline capable of carrying talented and committed women into political life in Canada.

Some women face additional barriers as a result of diverse identity factors, which particularly affects the democratic participation of visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and youth.

Indigenous women in particular can face great barriers to leadership positions. In 2015, only three of the 88 women elected to Parliament were indigenous. In first nations communities, women represented only 17.2% of band chiefs.

[*Translation*]

Addressing the many different barriers to our democratic participation requires the commitment of many different stakeholders.

[*English*]

Fostering women's leadership skills needs to start at the grassroots. It requires harnessing the power of networks and mentors to ensure women have the necessary tools and support to make it through the pipeline. For this reason, Status of Women Canada, through its women's program, supports projects that strengthen the participation of women in democracy and enhance their chances of success in the pipeline.

Among these is support for women's empowerment with over $13.5 million in funding for 25 projects to promote and enhance the participation of women in civic and political life by addressing systemic barriers. Of this, $5 million went to projects to strengthen the voice of indigenous women in their communities. Another is funding to advance gender equality, with $18 million for approximately 50 projects that engage some 150 women leaders from across the country working to advance gender equality locally and as part of a pan-Canadian network.

These investments allow us to support the work of organizations like Equal Voice, whose Daughters of the Vote initiative brought 338 young women leaders, representing each federal riding, to Ottawa to communicate their vision for Canada in 2017.

The government is also looking at ways to address structural barriers to women in politics. It announced in budget 2018 that it supports the measures recommended by the procedure and House affairs committee to make the House of Commons more family friendly, which my colleagues will address.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

Real change for women in politics cannot happen without a commitment from political parties to look at their candidate recruitment and selection processes were sexism and implicit bias play out.

[*English*]

Research by Dr. Melanee Thomas at the University of Calgary shows that when parties are recruiting in ridings they know they can win, they prefer to place male candidates. Women are more likely to be chosen as nominees in areas considered strongholds for other parties, decreasing their likelihood of winning and the number of elected women overall. Political parties could look to the steps taken by the Government of Canada to integrate gender-based analysis plus into all decision-making, and to address biases in internal appointment processes.

As a result of the introduction of an open, transparent, and merit-based approach to selecting Governor in Council appointments in 2015, the appointment of women has increased by 10%, and is now at 44% for GIC appointments.

[*Translation*]

Even with opportunities and structural changes, harassment remains one of the most significant barriers to women in politics.

A 2016 study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union reveals that sexism, harassment and violence against women MPs are global problems that impede gender equality and undermine the foundations of democracy.

[*English*]

IPU's study, based on interviews with women MPs from 39 countries, reports that more than 80% of survey participants have experienced some form of psychological violence, including threats of death, rape, beatings, or abduction, during their parliamentary terms, as well as threats to their children. Social media is the main channel where psychological violence is perpetrated.

Sexist insults are equally frequent, with nearly two-thirds of respondents reporting this. Sexual harassment is described as common practice, and condescension a daily occurrence. Levels of physical violence are also significant, with 20% reporting they had been slapped, pushed, struck, or targeted by an object that could have injured them.

[*Translation*]

These findings are not unlike those of a December 2017 survey of female MPs in Canada. The government is moving to address this situation, having introduced Bill C-65 to ensure that federally regulated workplaces, including Parliament, are free from sexual harassment and violence.

[*English*]

Budget 2018 has also indicated $34.5 million starting in 2018-19, and $7.4 million per year ongoing, to support implementation of Bill C-65.

As can be seen, achieving equality for women in politics requires the participation of a wide range of actors working toward long-term solutions. Encouragingly, this scenario is playing out in many jurisdictions across the globe. In the U.K., MPs across party lines have formed the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament, to improve the recruitment and retention of women in politics. Diverse countries, such as Mexico, Rwanda, and Spain, have seen success with quotas, requiring that a certain proportion of women candidates fielded by a political party be women.

Going forward, this study will be invaluable to all of us for understanding the barriers to democratic participation that women face in Canada, and for searching out meaningful solutions. Status of Women Canada is looking forward to hearing the testimonies of stakeholders and experts in this area. We also await the recommendations of this committee to promote the institutional and cultural changes that will make our democracy more inclusive of women, in all our diversity.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I apologize because my initial introduction was confusing. I'm sorry.

Riri, Joshua, and Selina, you're with the Privy Council Office. It's time for your remarks.

Ms. Riri Shen (Director of Operations, Democratic Institutions, Privy Council Office): Madam Chair, I'd like to start my opening remarks by thanking the chair and the committee for inviting us to come before you today on the important topic of barriers facing women in politics in Canada.

My name is Riri Shen. I'm the director of operations for the democratic institutions secretariat at the Privy Council Office. I'm here today with Selena Beattie, director of operations, cabinet affairs, legislation and House planning, and Joshua Bath, an analyst at democratic institutions.

● (1645)

[*Translation*]

I would like to focus my remarks today on the current state of representation of women in Canada's democratic institutions, including in the Senate, and outline some of the recent actions brought forth by the government to increase accessibility to our democratic institutions. I will focus my remarks on the federal level.

As I am sure this committee is aware, the 2015 election set new records for women's participation and in terms of the number of women elected to the House of Commons. Roughly 30% of candidates in the 2015 election identified as women, and 26% of members elected to the House were women. Following a number of by-elections, which have occurred since the 42nd general election, the proportion of women in the House has risen to 27.1%.

While these are historic highs in terms of women's representation in the House of Commons, the fact remains that women's representation continues to sit at rates far below parity and at rates below those in a number of like-minded democracies.

[*English*]

Academic research has identified a number of barriers to the participation of women in Canadian federal politics. In terms of Canada's electoral system, academics have noted barriers ranging from access to funds and financing to networking, as well as internal party policies, such as nomination contests, lack of party support to women candidates, and placing women candidates in unwinnable ridings. Additionally, academics have found that factors outside of our electoral system play a role in women's representation, including but not limited to the tone in the House of Commons, family-friendly policies for members, the harassment of women representatives online, family commitments, and other broad social phenomena. Increasing women's participation and representation is a complex issue. With that said, the government is continuing to take action to remove or alleviate some of the barriers women face when running for office.

[*Translation*]

The government announced in Budget 2018, tabled on February 27, that it is supportive of, and will work with Parliament on, the recommendations put forward in the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs entitled "Support for Members of Parliament With Young Children".

This includes working with Parliamentarians to ensure that the House of Commons is flexible, compassionate and reasonable in making accommodations for members with needs for young children that are related to their parliamentary functions—which we would be happy to detail further if you have questions.

The government has also followed through on its commitment to amend the Parliament of Canada Act to provide for the creation of maternity and parental leave for parliamentarians. That amendment is part of Bill C-74, the Budget Implementation Act, 2018, No. 1.

[*English*]

Bill C-76, the elections modernization act, which was introduced by the Minister of Democratic Institutions on April 30, 2018, proposes a number of updates to the Canada Elections Act that are aimed at making our electoral system more accessible to Canadians.

I wish to highlight provisions contained in Bill C-76 which are meant to reduce barriers to candidates in the treatment of regulated expenses to increase equity and accessibility in seeking election.

The bill would amend the Canada Elections Act to indicate that candidates may opt to pay expenses related to child care, to a candidate's own disability, or to the provision of care of a dependant's disability out of their personal funds in addition to campaign funds. This means that candidates would not be disadvantaged by requiring such expenses to count toward their expense limits during an election.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

I would add that these expenses would be eligible for reimbursement following an election at an increased level of 90% rather than the current reimbursement rate of 60%. While these amendments would benefit both women and men, evidence suggests this would be more likely to benefit women candidates. In ensuring that women and men, in all their diversity, are able to participate in our elections, Bill C-76 would additionally make numerous amendments to reduce barriers to participation by persons with disabilities.

[*English*]

These include increased support and assistance at polls for persons with disabilities, increased accommodation to participate in the political debate, and broadening the application of existing provisions in the act so they do not apply only to individuals with physical disabilities.

The Chair: Riri, before we carry on, thank you so much for the testimony. We've gone over your 10 minutes by quite a bit. If you wouldn't mind, we would be able to distribute your opening comments so we can look at the additional information in there, if that's okay with you. If you provide it directly to the clerk, she will make sure it gets out to everybody.

We're now going to begin our seven-minute rounds of questioning, and we're going to start with Bernadette Jordan.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing today.

I represent a rural riding in Nova Scotia, and I am the only woman elected in the province of Nova Scotia, only one of nine since women have been able to run federally. When I look at the 27.1%, I think you said, of women in the House now, I would say that is predominantly urban women.

What are we doing to have more women run in rural areas?

Ms. Riri Shen: I am not aware of any provisions in the Canada Elections Act or the elections modernization act with respect to that particular issue.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Does anyone from Status of Women want to comment on whether anything is being done to increase the number of rural women? Where you live shouldn't be a barrier to running.

Ms. Justine Akman: As this committee is very familiar, we have what's called the women's program at Status of Women Canada, and we've had extensive calls for proposals on leadership issues. Women in both rural and urban areas would be eligible.

We are also investing in leadership research, given the increases to our research budget since 2016 and in budget 2017 as well. With Statistics Canada and research experts from across the country, including folks in all parts of the country, rural, remote, urban, we are undertaking a scan of what's happening in various leadership spaces and what research exists. We'll be using that scan to look at research gaps to see where we can improve our information.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: We know that you have to see it to be it, which is a big push for more women to run. If they see themselves in those roles, they are more likely to run, and yet we are still only at 27.1%. I think you said of 64 we are 61st—it's in the sixties.

Are there any female-led mentorship programs or professional networks that are accessible to women who are interested in running? That's more a Status of Women question.

Ms. Justine Akman: We would have to get back to you on that. In particular, for running in political parties, I'm not familiar.... No. We would have to get back to you, if that's okay.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: Okay.

I was recently on a panel for the Women in Politics Forum, Equal Voice, a campaign school for women in Halifax. We talked a lot about the systemic barriers that women face during the nomination process.

What role can the federal government play in eliminating those barriers?

● (1655)

Ms. Justine Akman: I will take that, but I will also welcome my colleagues to jump in.

There's an incredible number of different roles.

Bill C-65, which addressed harassment in a variety of workplaces, is one of the most important measures.

As I mentioned, that Inter-Parliamentary Union study identified harassment as one of the major barriers to women entering politics. I have had the opportunity a couple of times to be part of a panel run by them at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and the tales were truly harrowing, I would say, in terms of levels of both emotional and physical harassment of female politicians.

Certainly, Bill C-65 will help in that space, but also the work that Status of Women does to address gender and equality generally, speaking about gender-based violence. The work we have under that program would also help in that space.

As I mentioned, the women's program funds a lot of work in the leadership space, so Nancy Gardiner will jump in on that.

Ms. Nancy Gardiner (Senior Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women): I was also going to mention, your work with Equal Voice, we have had some experience also working with them on projects that have brought young women to these spaces and to demonstrate what it is like to actually be positioned into work in this area. I think those projects and opportunities for young women across Canada do allow them to see what it means to be in these spaces and to empower them to go back to their own communities.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: That's an interesting point. Can it also be a deterrent?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: From some of the feedback that I did hear in terms of what young women experienced, there were lots of positive stories and lots of great opportunities for them going back in their communities. There were some interesting points some of these young women did raise. I think if we were to do that again, we would look at some of those lessons learned from that opportunity.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: I know one of the things I have heard from women who have done the university programs, like women in the House programs, is once they sit through question period, they never want to run because of the behaviour in the House during QP. Have you heard that feedback as well?

It's great to bring people. I think it's wonderful that we offer them that opportunity. I wish I had had it. At the same time, I think we have to look at what's being said that is not positive as well so we can address those things.

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: Those are some of the best lessons learned, I think, out of that particular opportunity. It wasn't just a happy experience with some of the challenges hidden. It wasn't just the challenges of potentially what they may have seen, but things they raise, like child care. These are real issues they would have seen or potentially thought that women, when they did get a little bit older—or maybe when they did think of this as an opportunity—were identifying as challenges. As Justine said, we're lucky in terms of having the opportunity to fund some of these types of projects to see where we can combat some of those barriers.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan: With regard to the funding, are there metrics for measurement of success once those programs are in place? Is there a way to determine if they have been successful? Is there a way to measure if more women have become involved because of the investments that have been made, or is it just something we're hoping is going to happen?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: I think in terms of the results, basically the projects are looking at what initiatives we can put in place that would address systematic barriers, not a one-off project, but looking at what some of the opportunities are. As I said, the child care example is looking at some examples of things that can be put in place. We look at it. We see how the project works and see what it means in terms of putting it into action. Then we test to see if that actually does make an impact.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much, Nancy.

We're now going to move over to Rachael Harder for her seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

My first question is for both groups. Maybe we will start with Status of Women, and then we will move over to the Privy Council.

Both of you commented on the practice of putting men in winnable ridings and women in non-winnable ridings. Can you tell me if this is a practice of all political parties, or is this a practice of specific political parties?

Ms. Justine Akman: I am not intimately familiar with the research that I referred to, but I believe it was all political parties. We could confirm later on. It was a non-profit organization, a civil society organization, that did the research, so it would have been non-partisan. It would have done the research across political lines.

● (1700)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Does the Privy Council have anything to say with regard to that? You mentioned the same thing in your opening remarks.

Mr. Joshua Bath (Analyst, Democratic Institutions, Privy Council Office): We don't have information that separates the various political parties, but there is an incumbency advantage, and that generally seems to support men.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I find it an interesting comment, because the way our electoral system is structured is first past the post, so parties don't necessarily have the opportunity to look at their candidates and shuffle them around. In your view, however, you're saying that is a common practice, that parties would look at their slate of 338 candidates, and then decide that women are going to go into the ridings that are non-winnable and the men are going into ridings that are winnable. That's what was communicated in your opening remarks. Is that correct?

Ms. Justine Akman: To be more precise on this research, I said civil society, but it's Dr. Melanee Thomas of the University of Calgary. It shows that, when recruiting in ridings they know they can win, they prefer to place male candidates, so it's in the recruitment process, from what I understand.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I find it interesting, because it speaks to motive or desire rather than simply an observation of numerical value. I would be interested to know the research that shows that a party is motivated to put men in winnable ridings and to put women in non-winnable ridings. Do we have any research that would show that is the motive of parties?

Ms. Riri Shen: I'm not aware of any.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

My next question is for Status of Women.

You've made it clear that harassment is one barrier that a woman would face that would perhaps prevent her from entering into politics, or that a woman would give as a reason to not enter into politics.

Often when we talk about harassment, we talk about the actions of a man towards a woman. Do you have any information with regard to the harassment that women face from their female colleagues?

Ms. Justine Akman: I'm not aware of any research that's looked into that.

Ms. Rachael Harder: You wouldn't be aware of any women giving that as a reason to not enter.

Ms. Justine Akman: If there is research, I haven't had access to it in my three years with Status of Women Canada.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Have you ever asked questions on that or done studies with regard to that?

Ms. Justine Akman: Status of Women Canada did not have a research budget before 2016, and we hadn't done research for some time before then, so as an agency, we have not asked that research question.

Ms. Rachael Harder: It would be an interesting one to ask, because in my conversations with women, whether it's at the municipal level, provincial level, or federal level, it's a comment that is consistently made. There are many women who don't have a problem with their male colleagues, but they certainly feel degraded by their female colleagues. There are many women who would say that their female colleagues are more likely to hold them down or hold them back than their male colleagues. It would be a very interesting point for a study.

My next question is also for Status of Women.

We talk a lot about diversity, and I believe you did in your opening remarks, and you talked about the fact that we want a diverse House of Commons. We want a diverse provincial legislature. We want diverse municipal governments. If diversity is a good thing, which, of course, I think all of us around this table agree, should it then be encouraged in all areas when it comes to the political realm and women entering into political office?

Ms. Justine Akman: I'm sorry, it sounds like you're asking a subjective question, which I wouldn't be in a position to answer.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm just asking if diversity should be supported.

Ms. Justine Akman: In all political realms?

Ms. Rachael Harder: For women entering political office.

Ms. Justine Akman: If all forms of diversity should be supported for women entering into political office—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Let me ask it this way—

Ms. Justine Akman: —I believe that the position of government would be yes, women with disabilities, minority women of various types, and indigenous women. My understanding of this government's position is that yes, all forms of disability intersectionality should enter into this discussion, absolutely.

● (1705)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Is there one type of woman that is better than another?

Ms. Justine Akman: No. There is no hierarchy of rights from a constitutional perspective and I don't believe from a government policy perspective either.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That's good.

What about faith? Should women of all faiths enter into politics?

Ms. Justine Akman: I have never been privy to a government position on that issue.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Are there certain beliefs that don't belong in politics? Should women of all beliefs be running?

Ms. Justine Akman: We're not in a position to answer.

Ms. Rachael Harder: What about values? Should women of all values run? Would the House of Commons be open to women of all values?

Ms. Justine Akman: That's not for our agency. I don't have a departmental point of view on that issue.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

Should women of all ethnicities run?

Ms. Justine Akman: I believe the government has been clear on its positions on diversity generally.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

Should the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms be upheld for all women who choose to run for political office?

Ms. Justine Akman: I would say yes because all governments must follow the law.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Quach, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here.

Partisan questions sometimes come up.

Ms. Shen, I had a strong reaction to what you said regarding services for members with young children. I have a little girl who will be four years old. So she was born during my first term as member of Parliament. We formed a group of four members and fought for at least a family room to breastfeed and for all Parliament washrooms—both women's and men's—to be equipped with a changing table. It took a long time, but we have finally managed to get it done.

That said, there are still barriers that make things difficult for women with young children. The parliamentary daycare gives priority to members' children, but it does not accept children under the age of 18 months. In addition, we don't have access to it if we do not pay for five days of daycare per week. However, those of us who do not live in the Ottawa-Gatineau region are often here only three days a week.

Christine Moore and I have created a nanny service. It is pretty nice to be able to have our child in the House of Commons. That is quite tolerated in the case of children under the age of two, but this was not the case when we had our children in 2014 or 2015.

Something else made me react in Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act, which talks about the "treatment of candidates' expenses". This is an improvement, but it is still stated that those are expenses for the care of a person with an incapacity or a dependent. I cannot believe that, in the reimbursement of expenses, having a child is considered a handicap for the mother or father who would like to run for office.

In short, progress has been made, and I hope things will continue to move in that direction. I may have misunderstood, but I also hope the notion of handicap could be changed.

The two witness panels—especially the Status of Women Canada representatives—talked a lot about initiatives taken for the advancement of women. Can you tell us a bit more about unconscious biases? Is relevant training planned on the Hill? You have mostly talked about the situation within the federal government. People talk about intellectual self-defence. Could intellectual self-defence courses be provided for women?

Women have been consulted through programs aimed at encouraging them to run for office. They said they did not know how to respond to degrading comments, both by women and by men. When they hear those kinds of comments, they freeze up and don't know how to respond. That has happened in committee. It is also because we are young women—at least I am. We have not received training or information on that, and I think that is a failure.

Another issue is that the media do not show female models. That is a problem because people are under the impression that no women are interested in politics, but some are, although there is still a long way to go. Is any funding set aside for interviews with women in politics to show that it is done, that it is positive, enjoyable and useful?

● (1710)

Ms. Selena Beattie (Director of Operations, Cabinet Affairs, Legislation and House Planning, Privy Council Office): I think that three questions were asked. I will first answer the one about the measures to make Parliament more family-friendly. Then I will ask my colleagues from the Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women, to answer the question about expenses.

Very early in its mandate, the government established a priority to make parliamentarians' family lives easier. The Leader of the Government in the House asked your colleagues from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to consider the issue. They produced a report last fall that focused on five important themes. The first two themes were related to the travel points system.

In that respect, they suggested, first, that flexibility be shown towards members with more than two children under the age of two and that members be told that, in this case, another adult could accompany the children.

The second recommendation related to the travel points system was to look into the possibility of allowing members to have a child travelling with them without that counting against their points. In that respect, the Board of Internal Economy only looked at the issue on May 24. Its members adopted a few amendments that, I believe, have been shared with all members. In fact, the minutes are available on Parliament's website. The amendments they made, unless I am mistaken, were that no points would be deducted for children under the age of six and that members with more than one child aged between six and 20 would have additional points to ensure that the points would be provided for the children's travel.

The third theme covered by the committee focused on maternity and parental leave. As you know, right now, members do not have access to maternity or parental leave. However, the Parliament of Canada Act requires that, for each day of missed meetings beyond 21 days, a penalty be applied and members be unable to pay into employment insurance. So the board recommended that this be changed.

The government introduced an amendment to Bill C-74, the Budget Implementation Act, No.1 which is currently being considered by parliamentarians. That amendment aims to allow Parliament to create a regime for maternity and parental leave. That would enable the House of Commons and the Senate to establish that kind of a regime. Of course, it will be up to parliamentarians to decide what specific measures will be involved.

[*English*]

The Chair: Selena, we're already over the seven minutes, but thank you very much. Maybe we can get back to that answer.

I'm now going to move to Eva, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for joining us today.

I have the honour to represent the constituents of Vimy, in Laval. In addition, I am the lone Laval MP.

I ran for office twice before I won. At the same time, I was raising my triplets and studying full time at the university to earn two degrees. So I am a woman who tried twice to get elected, and I was elected in 2015. I did not give up.

I would like to ask you questions about women's participation in politics. Could you tell us about the barriers women face, aside from the fact that they are sometimes not appointed in ridings where victory is pretty much guaranteed. Can you explain to us the difference between the rural context and the urban context?

Another part of my question concerns women who are members of minority groups, of special groups. Are there more obstacles for those women related to political life than for men?

My question is for the representatives of the Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women.

● (1715)

[*English*]

Ms. Justine Akman: Thank you for the question.

[*Translation*]

I will answer in English, if that's okay with you.

[*English*]

Barriers that prevent women from becoming involved in politics include, among others—and I referred to some of this in my opening remarks—societal perceptions of appropriate career paths for women, a lack of support from party leadership, and fear of negative attacks and media attention based on gender norms. Stereotype perceptions or unconscious bias about leadership roles can impact the way female politicians are viewed and feel about themselves in terms of confidence.

For instance, a male politician may be described as competitive and tough, but a female politician with the same qualities may be viewed as cold and aggressive. Catalyst is a non-profit organization which found that women leaders who work in traditionally masculine occupations have their leadership skills judged more harshly than their male counterparts do. While a man in a leadership role can be considered both competent and likeable, a competent woman in the same role is rarely considered likeable. Other harmful perceptions include the idea that women are too soft to be in politics and that women are not natural leaders.

There is research. The Catalyst research does talk about how female politicians of colour experience the most hostility. That gets to the second part of your question.

We talked a bit about sexism, but it plays out in party recruitment as I talked about in the research of Dr. Melanee Thomas at the University of Calgary. We've already discussed that a bit.

Then there's the media with its often unbalanced treatment of women in politics, which reinforces politics as a male arena and something that men should do. In a review of 2,500 articles spanning 37 years, University of Alberta political scientist Dr. Linda Trimble found that women who ran for leadership of major political parties faced disproportionate scrutiny of their bodies, appearance, and adherence to traditional gender roles such as their marital status, compared with their male counterparts. Not surprisingly, women report being reluctant to go into politics because of how the media, including social media, will treat them, and they report security and safety concerns.

As I talked about earlier, female politicians are often targets of sexual harassment and misconduct and heckling. A December 2017 survey of female MPs by the Canadian Press found that 58% said they had personally been the target of one or more forms of sexual misconduct while in office, and of the 22 MPs who had experienced sexual misconduct, 15 said the misconduct was committed by another MP.

That just speaks to some of the barriers that you were asking about.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

We heard earlier from Statistics Canada officials who said that 18% of women in Quebec are interested in entering politics, the highest rate among all the provinces. I wonder why the percentage is the highest in Quebec. What are your thoughts? Are there different programs in Quebec than in the other provinces? Why are women more interested in entering politics in Quebec than elsewhere?

[*English*]

Ms. Justine Akman: I'm not able to answer why in Quebec specifically. What we do know through our federal, provincial, and territorial work is that there are programs in a variety of provinces to support women in politics. Alberta's government with its supportive program aims to increase gender parity in elected positions through training, mentoring, or communities of practice.

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women has something called the Campaign School for Women: Leaders in Action. It's a course that prepares graduates to run for public office, organize campaigns, or pursue non-elected political roles.

The Government of New Brunswick has changed the way political parties receive government funds.

There are different initiatives across the country. Interestingly, for our next federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Yukon, the Northwest Territories minister for the status of women has been asking that women in leadership, women in politics be one of the issues that we speak about.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: I will now turn to the officials from the Privy Council Office.

We know that women currently hold 42 of 97 seats in the Senate, or 47% of all the seats. That is just 27.1% of the current number of women MPs. What do you think we could do to increase women's participation in politics in order to get more women MPs elected?

● (1720)

Ms. Riri Shen: It is difficult to recommend measures to increase the participation of women. As my colleagues pointed out, it is a very complex issue. As to the Senate, the government has created a new appointment process that is open and transparent. It is a merit-based system. Among the current government's appointees to the Senate, 58.5% are women.

[*English*]

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

We'll now go to our second round.

We'll begin with Gérard Deltell for five minutes.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Parliament of Canada.

I had the privilege of serving in Quebec's National Assembly and I have now been in the House of Commons for 10 years. I have had the opportunity and great privilege of serving with first-rate people, both men and women. I remember Ms. Sylvie Roy, who was my first leader in the legislature and who passed away two years ago, unfortunately. I also think of Ms. Agnès Maltais. She was an staunch member of the PQ, whereas I was a very proud member of the ADQ. We had some absolutely scathing political debates, but with the utmost respect. I also remember Ms. Michelle Courchesne, the first female member opposite that I rubbed shoulders with. She was the minister of education while I was the education critic. We always worked positively for Quebec's future while I was there, despite our political differences and being members of the opposite sex.

I was also fortunate to serve in Quebec's national assembly under a government led by a woman, Ms. Pauline Marois. I often said that Ms. Marois and I agreed on two things: that the sun rose in the east and set in the west. Otherwise, we had different opinions on just about everything. Ms. Marois was nonetheless a strong presence in Quebec's political life, and therefore in Canadian politics, for over 30 years. She held all the important political positions in Quebec. When she retired, former premier Jean Charest said, roughly translated:

> Perhaps a man will do the same thing one day, but I doubt it.

Since I have been in the House of Commons, I have been fortunate to meet first-rate people, of all political stripes. There is Ms. Harder, who I am getting to know, and Ms. Vecchio, of course. And Ms. Ambrose also, who was my first House leader here. She did an outstanding job and served her country as party leader and as minister.

Looking back in time, we must not forget Ms. Flora MacDonald, the first woman to serve as minister of foreign affairs. It was an extremely difficult time. It was 1979 and there was a minority government. She was sworn in 39 years ago yesterday. Ms. MacDonald played a prominent international role at a time when Canada was going through one of its worst political crises. She had to deal with six American hostages who were hiding in the Canadian embassy in Iran, where there was a civil war. With Ms. MacDonald's leadership and the support of the Right Honourable Joe Clark, the prime minister of the day, Canadian diplomacy had one of its brightest moments in our country's history.

All these people that I have had the pleasure of working with were, without exception, elected in the current political system. In our system, people who run for office either win or are defeated. First, they have to be chosen by their political party. In some cases, they are appointed by the party leader, while in others they are chosen by its members.

My question is very simple. In a political system such as ours, how can we achieve equality when the choice is up to the members of the political parties, whether Conservative, Liberal or NDP, and then ultimately the population?

How can we achieve the equality we hope for so much?

● (1725)

[*English*]

Ms. Justine Akman: I'll acknowledge that we have incredible women political leaders in Canada. We are very fortunate. However, we have not actually met what is recognized as the tipping point to have a change, which is 30%, whether it's on a corporate board or in Parliament. While 27% is a historic high for Canada, it still falls below the United Nations' recommendation of having at least 30% as the critical threshold for women in decision-making roles.

If we dig into that deeper, which we do at Status of Women, given that we look at intersectionality in everything we do, of those seats, only 15 visible minority women and three indigenous women were elected in 2015, so there is still some way to go.

If we look around the world, there is a variety of approaches to doing this. In my opening remarks I talked about countries such as Mexico and Rwanda, which always stand out.

There are countries with quota systems in various ways. It's certainly not something that Status of Women has advocated for, whether it's in politics or women on boards, but the proof is in the data. Quota systems are effective. They tend to create the desired change. In France, a parity law was introduced in 2000, requiring parties to present gender-balanced party lists for any elections, and ultimately there was an increase from 25% to 47%.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: My main question is, what do you propose?

The Chair: Mr. Deltell, you know I'd love to hear you, but we're over our time.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Me too, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Maybe we can talk about this later, but we're going to move to Sean Fraser for the remaining five minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Perfect. We just have a few minutes. Thanks very much. I am curious to hear Mr. Deltell as well, but we'll have to carry on another day.

You mentioned the research funding for Status of Women Canada since 2016. With respect to the research that's going on, is anybody actually speaking to women who've been elected and doing exit interviews with them to find out what their experience was and what their suggestions would be on how to get more women elected?

Ms. Justine Akman: Not at the moment, but thank you for the suggestion.

Mr. Sean Fraser: It might follow as a recommendation.

Ms. Jordan asked a question earlier that I've been holding onto this whole time, because you had only 20 seconds to respond.

Regarding the actual return on investment, I know that Daughters of the Vote was a great example. There were more women sitting in the House of Commons that day than have ever been elected to the House of Commons. Are there any procedures put in place to actually gauge whether this was successful? It was great to see everybody there that day, and it would be that much greater if 10 years from now they were sitting there professionally.

Is any type of longitudinal study being done on the community organizations that we're funding or on the initiatives that are going on, rather than having it be a feel-good thing for the government of the day? Is anybody studying this to make sure that the money being spent is resulting in change?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: That's an excellent question. All of the projects are looked at in terms of results and what we're actually achieving from the results. There has been an evaluation of the women's program generally in terms of how successful these programs are and in terms of creating systemic change. All of these pieces are being considered under that evaluation and results framework.

You talked about the Daughters of the Vote and it being a feel-good project. That's partly true, yes, but part of the intent of the project was to actually look at young women to see if this is an option for them. Based on that, doing it once is maybe not going to get us the results we need, so we need to figure out whether there are other opportunities for us to look at in terms of enabling these young women to participate, and then at what are the longer-term results. We can look at them potentially doing things in their own communities that actually enhance their opportunities, not necessarily taking on political roles but as leaders in the community.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Are you actually following the individuals who took part in this? Do you have a plan for the long term?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: No, that's not part of the longitudinal study for—

Mr. Sean Fraser: Is there a reason we couldn't be doing that?

Ms. Nancy Gardiner: There isn't a reason we couldn't be doing that. It was not part of that particular project.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Someone from PCO discussed the potential for setting quotas for candidates but in the next breath talked about the very real problem of placing women in ridings they can't win. If we were going to entertain a discussion about measures that would actually encourage parties to have parity in terms of their candidate slate, what protections could we put in place to ensure there isn't a practice of just putting in placeholder candidates, where they know they're never going to win, to satisfy an artificial requirement?

● (1730)

Mr. Joshua Bath: One of the most effective mechanisms that has been seen in a country like Canada.... I believe the Special Committee on Electoral Reform discussed this in their final report, the fact that nomination contests are seen as one of the biggest barriers to women's participation in Canada. There are several political parties that have put in place, on a voluntary basis, rules about when and how nomination contests are held. I think that could be something the committee might wish to look at in terms of....

Mr. Sean Fraser: I think that's my time. It's 5:30.

The Chair: That clock is off by two.

Ms. Justine Akman: Political training, mentorship, leadership programs—the kind we do at Status of Women but perhaps more targeted ones—and enhancing research, those things will also help. It's not just about quotas necessarily.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I just want to let you know that my Daughter of the Vote is doing tons of things now in our community. I think she really was helped by that. Great work.

Our next meeting is going to be Thursday, June 7. We'll have Shal Marriott, Kayleigh Erickson, Nancy Peckford, and Michaela Glasgo.

Dissenting and supplementary reports for the women's economic report are due by 12:00 p.m. on Friday and midnight for indigenous women.

The meeting is adjourned.

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